

3 Tips for Positive-Minded Managers



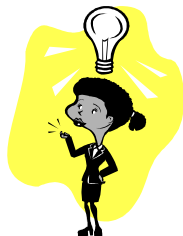
Managing people calls for a mix of skills, and any list is bound to leave a few important items off. But these three issues are crucial to leading with integrity and building a positive, productive relationship with your workforce:

- **The golden rule.** Don't adopt a "Do as I say, not as I do" attitude with your employees. If you expect them to be honest with you, tell them the truth even when it feels awkward or risky. Don't tell them to get the job done any way they can and then criticize their methods. Be consistent and fair in your treatment of everyone you work with.
- **The face-to-face element.** Employees need to feel comfortable talking to you one on one. If their only interaction comes through curt emails and brief, meaningless chats, they won't ask questions, make suggestions, or alert you to problems when you've got the best chance of avoiding disaster. Be approachable: Keep your door open, symbolically and literally, as much as possible; listen to what they say; and watch for hints that they want to tell you more. Encourage employees to speak their minds, and don't punish them when they do.
- **Everybody makes mistakes.** Employees won't lose respect for you when you're wrong, unless you refuse to admit it. Don't waste time attempting to justify your decisions when they fail to achieve results: Be open about what went wrong, and then move on. Results, not excuses, matter to employees and managers alike.

Unleash your creativity with the right questions

People often talk about creativity as if it must arrive as a bolt out of the blue, a flash of inspiration that strikes without warning. In truth, however, there are ways to manufacture creativity, and most of them have to do with asking the right questions. The next time you've got a tricky problem to solve, try these queries to start thinking differently:

- What would happen if . . . ?
- Can we do this a different way?
- Why do we do it this way?
- What's the silliest way we could do this?
- What's the worst thing we could try?
- If solving this problem were a matter of life and death, what would we do?
- If we were one of our competitors, how would we do it?
- What three changes would make this idea better? What would make it worse?



Keep your desk . . . and your career . . . well organized for success



A messy desk doesn't just slow down your ability to find things—it can impede your career development. A survey of HR executives by OfficeTeam found that more than eight in 10 said an untidy workspace influences their view of that employee's professionalism. Peter Walsh, of Peter Walsh Design in Sherman Oaks, CA, says that almost 49 percent of your co-workers wonder about your abilities if you're not capable of keeping your desk clean.

With that in mind, try these tips for keeping your working area neat and efficient:

- **Create "zones."** Don't just toss documents, books, supplies, etc., across your desk. Designate specific areas for particular items: progress reports in one corner, mail in another, staplers and paperclips in your top drawer, and so forth. This will make finding things quicker and easier.
- **Clean up regularly.** Before lunch, and right before you go home, spend a few minutes sorting your desk. File what you need, discard what you don't, and straighten everything up so it's waiting in the right location when you return.
- **Respond promptly.** Resist the urge to set stuff aside for an indeterminate "later." Make a point of filing, discarding, or acting on items right away so they don't pile up and become overwhelming to contemplate.

The power of "why"



Whether you're managing a team of employees or you're on your own, remember that although what you do and how you do it are important, it's the "why" that provides real motivation to succeed. An experiment conducted by the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business demonstrates the power of "why."

At a university call center where employees phone alumni to solicit contributions to scholarship funds, the staff was randomly divided into three groups:

- ➔ The first read stories written by former call center employees about the benefits of the job (improved communication and sales skills, and so forth);
- ➔ The second read accounts from former students about how their scholarships helped them with their education, careers, and lives;
- ➔ The third, a control group, read nothing.

Measuring the results of the three teams after a month, the researchers found that the first group and the third group raised roughly the same amount of money from alumni after the experiment began as before.

But callers in the second group, who'd read inspirational stories about the impact of the scholarships they were raising funds for, raised twice as much money from twice as many alumni as they had before.